

**Minutes of the  
Future Enrollment & Facilities Task Force Subcommittee  
March 18, 2009**

**Present:**

**Margery T. Clark, Ed. M., Elementary Facilities  
Associate-Planning/Management  
New England School Development Council  
John H. Kennedy, M.A., Team Leader,  
Associate-Planning/Management  
New England School Development Council  
Karen Lynch, Subcommittee Chair  
Denise Arsenault, Subcommittee Member  
John Bento, Subcommittee Member  
Dr. Edward Mara, Superintendent of Schools  
Melinda Thies, Assistant Superintendent  
Mary Cerullo, Executive Director of Literacy  
Diana Campbell  
Marjorie McBride  
John Saviano  
Kristen Quinn, Parent  
Susan Rancourt, Parent**

**The meeting was called to order by Chair Karen Lynch at 5:07 p.m.  
This was the first official meeting of the Future Enrollment and  
Facilities Task Force.**

**John Kennedy H. Kennedy and Margery T. Clark from the New England School Development Council opened the meeting by sharing findings from their recent visits to all district school buildings. These findings were presented in the Demography and Capacity Study.**

**Mr. Kennedy began by complimenting members of the district for taking this formalized approach and engaging in thoughtful planning for possible enrollment increases in the district. He added this approach will benefit the district in the future.**

**Mr. Kennedy expressed appreciation for the tremendous cooperation from both the individuals in the school system, administrative staff, office staff, and the community. Individuals were very forthcoming with information. He reported it to be a very positive experience in every aspect; Faculty, staff, and community members all voiced pride in the current school district and both he and Margery shared this was very refreshing.**

**This preliminary Demographic and Capacity Study will provide information to the district regarding what future enrollment numbers may look like within the next decade, take into consideration the current capacity of existing school buildings, then, recommend potential strategies the district could take to move forward in the future to accommodate increasing student populations.**

**The first piece of the study was the demography and enrollment projections. Data was gathered and analyzed including statistics from several sources, the US Census Bureau, town records, and HUD. NESDEC members also met with and interviewed town planners, school officials and local realtors.**

## **NEAR TERM GROWTH FACTORS**

**Factors influencing the near-term growth include the negative impact on the population due to the decrease of the number of building permits. The number of single family permits in 2007-2008 was twenty-six (26) which represents an 11 year low. The average number for the past five years has been sixty-one (61). Single family housing is the primary source of school enrollments. Like the region and nation Bristol Warren is experiencing a slowdown in terms of housing growth. The number of applications for new construction has slowed down considerable due to the downturn of the housing market. The sale of existing homes has declined and many residents are selling short which indicates individuals are selling a home at a price that is below the mortgage value, some as much as \$50,000 short of the mortgage value. Many sales occurring in this area are either a short sale or a foreclosure sale. Realtors also note there are many over-55, empty nesters are holding on to 3-4 bedroom homes not wanting to sell at the bottom of the market.**

**Increasing unemployment numbers have also impacted the decline of house purchases. However, on a positive note, a turnaround in the**

housing market is predicted for the spring of 2010. The last factor indicated in the demographic highlights, and an important one, is the decrease in birth rates. From 1997-2001 average births per year were 334. This has declined to 316 from 2002-2006. Birth rate is a big factor in terms of supplying students. A decline in births means fewer incoming students on an annual basis.

Diana Campbell asked Mr. Kennedy if the demographic near growth highlights took into consideration the private school students and their moving into the public school system due to the economic decline. Mr. Kennedy agreed that although things have not changed all that much in most communities due to the overall economic situations, the choice to send a child to a private school is gradually becoming a more difficult one. Reports indicate that private colleges are also seeing a decline in enrollment, while public colleges are seeing an increase due to the same economic factors. Mr. Kennedy stated that data will be gathered and this indicator will be addressed more clearly in the next revision of the report.

The availability of rental space in each community is also an important dynamic in the increase of student enrollment. Realtors did inform NESDEC members that a major rental facility will be opening due to the new dormitory space at Roger Williams University, allowing the opportunity for more families to move into the community.

**Marjorie Mc Bride stated that Bristol and Warren communities have a drawer to the military families stationed at the Newport Naval Base. The naval facilities and installations are increasing while naval housing is decreasing. Although they may only reside in either community for two or three years, Families are more likely to settle in the Bristol Warren communities.**

**John Saviano mentioned the possibility of the town of Warren adding 320 additional affordable housing units to be located at the former American Tourister site. Diana Campbell included that the town of Bristol is looking at developing 98 affordable housing unites at the former Robin Rug factory. The RI standard for affordable housing is 2.1 children; an important issue to consider when projecting student enrollments. Information garnered recently by NESDEC is both Bristol and Warren are in a position where they will be seeing the significant development of affordable housing. Neither town is above 6% in terms of total affordable housing units. The State directive of RI mandates that every community be at 10%. The state is pushing harder for affordable housing. Realtors tell us that young families having a difficult time moving into the communities because the price of homes is so high. Affordable housing options will allow young families to move into both communities. Enrollment spikes occur in school systems when there is either an increase in housing growth, a turn over in existing housing or an increase in new populations moving into the area. These changes will reflect in the increase or decrease in the birth rates.**

## **LONG TERM GROWTH FACTORS**

**Despite the current conditions occurring in the residential housing market, the Bristol Warren school district is likely to experience a significant increase in residential growth within the next decade.**

**Both communities still have considerable amounts of buildable land. Where land lots are very expensive the towns may consider zoning modifications, allowing for greater housing and residential construction and making it more affordable.**

**At the turn of the last decade the baby boom generation of the 40's and 50's now make up 30% of the population of Bristol and Warren. It is a graying town. In the 2000 Census, 18% were 65. Combine both these cohorts and 50% of the population of Bristol and Warren are over 55.**

**This indicates that there will be a huge turnover in existing 3-4 bedroom homes. This will appeal to families with small children looking to move from an apartment or from a small starter home to a larger 3-4 bedroom house. Larger home, more bedrooms foreshadows more children and an increase in student enrollment.**

**From 1998 to 2008 district enrollment, K-12, has declined by 496; enrollment of 3,870 in 1998 to 3,374 in 2008. The decline in enrollment can be attributed to the decline in birth rate.**

**Karen Lynch pointed out that enrollment figures from the Table 4 slide on page 6 have increased from the 2007-2008 school year to the 2008-2009, in grades K-5 with the exception of grade 4.**

**Factors which will influence the growth for the long term will be the same as they were over the last two to three years. In order to maintain the integrity of the findings, factors are based on status quo assumptions in terms of projections for grades K-12. Even at the status quo assumptions, projections indicate there will not be a significant drop off in either the elementary or middle schools within the next ten years.**

**At this time, factors indicate that Bristol Warren could experience, in the long-term, significant residential growth accelerated by new development and rapid property turnover. This expansion has the potential to increase Bristol Warren enrollments by 300-600 students; mostly happening at the elementary level. When families move into a new town, 70% of them have children at the elementary level, 20% at the middle school level and 10% at the high school level.**

**Subcommittee member, John Bento voiced his concern about the possible future increase of unemployment within the state. He proposed looking at these same indicators should the unemployment rate expand as high as 20% Rhode Island. What would the impact be on each community? There would be obvious continued diminished growth in terms of new housing construction, housing sales, and**

increased foreclosures--a depression-like situation. He questioned whether NESDEC would still project increased enrollments in the future.

Mr. Kennedy answered John be stating if recession were to extend over a period of an number of years, counteracting factors would come into play with clear stagnation in terms of population growth in many communities. He stated this is something that would be difficult to pin down.

Mr. Bento stated he would like to see the above-mentioned factors looked into by NESDEC and reported back to the committee. Mr. Kennedy will oblige this request and get the information to the committee at its next meeting.

Next, Margery Clark presented her findings from the preliminary report. The current operating capacity (COC) takes into consideration the class size and current building use. Bristol Warren is operating at COC class size of 24 students per class at the all levels. The planned operating capacity (POC) takes into account for future planning, any deficiencies within the facilities, provides for appropriate specialized facilities, core facilities, eliminates temporary portable faculties (which Bristol Warren does not have) and any current, major code problems. Margery commented that the district has done an extraordinary job regarding building renovations throughout the district and that it was a joy to visit each building.

## **Hugh Cole**

**As of October 1st, Hugh Cole had a student enrollment of 532. There are twenty-five grade 1-5 classrooms, five K classrooms and two pre-K classrooms. Seven of these twenty-five elementary classrooms are not occupied this year. Hugh Cole has a possible COC of 720 K-5 and 60 pre-K. (780 total student body.) NESDEC projections for average class size is 22 students per classroom at the elementary level, 20 students per classroom for K and 15 students per classroom for pre-K. Based on this the POC for Hugh Cole enrollment would be 650 K-5 and 60 pre-K. (710 total student body.) This would reduce the number of students enrolled at Hugh Cole to allow for the smaller class sizes.**

**Margery reported very few, if any deficiencies at the Hugh Cole school due to the recent addition and site work. She commented on the innovated approach the district took by turning over the older part of the school to the older students and having the new addition/areas used for the primary classrooms. She noted that during her visit the maintenance crew was in the process of changing over to the newer lighting.**

## **Colt Andrews**

**October 1st enrollment at Colt Andrews was 399. With eighteen**

**classrooms at Colt Andrews, fifteen interchangeable elementary and three K, Colt Andrews' COC could be 432. Reducing the classroom size, the POC would be 390. Colt Andrews is holding steady with its current enrollment.**

**Margery was impressed with the second library space located at Andrews for the smaller grades. She suggested strong blockades and better signage to be use to close off traffic between the two buildings during the school day. It was indicated to her by Dr. Mara that just this week, yellow chains were installed to block off the traffic in the road between buildings.**

### **Rockwell**

**October 1st enrollment at Rockwell was 290. Rockwell has thirteen total classrooms, 10 interchangeable elementary, and three kindergarten. The COC is 312. However, Margery noted there is not a dedicated health room, art and music share space, no field space for games or outside PE, OT/PT specialists share an area which is a former hallway, limited onsite parking. Ideally, Margery suggests Rockwell be reduced to a two-track school with a POC of 260.**

### **Guiteras**

**October 1st enrollment at Guiteras was 265. There are a total of twelve classrooms, 10 are interchangeable elementary and two are kindergarten classrooms. The COC for Guiteras is 288. However, by reducing the class size to 22 students per classroom in grades 1-5**

and 20 per classroom at K, the POC would be 260.

Margery noted the building is in amazing condition considering it was built in 1927. The driveway needs some attention. There is some peeling paint in the back hallway of the gym from moisture. The handicapped entrance on the back of the school needs a surveillance camera and a buzzer for admittance. There is not a dedicated health room and the music room is used for art. The traffic flow around the school has been improved but there is still an issue for students when they have to cross over the area.

#### **Kickemuit Middle School**

October 1st enrollment at KMS was 747. There are thirty-size interchangeable classrooms. The COC and POC are actually the same at 869. The average class size at the middle school level is 24. Deficiencies were at minimum with only uneven heat distribution mentioned. A surveillance system is on order with installation to be completed in the very near future.

#### **Mt. Hope High School**

October 1st enrollment at MHHS was 1,100. There are thirty-nine interchangeable classrooms. The COC is 1407 and POC 1218. The difference in occupancy occurs for two reasons: classes are heavily scheduled in terms of class time and utilization factors. Typically NESDEC uses a .85 multiplier when figuring usage of classroom space. However, classroom use at Mt. Hope is at 90%. Therefore,

teachers do not have their classroom for prep time. Average class size is 24 per classroom, which is average for the high school level. This, of course, varies with specialized classes like those in consumer science or technology.

It was suggested that the auditorium lighting be upgraded. However, NESDEC was informed that lighting in the auditorium was upgraded only four years ago. There was also mention of roof leaking. However, it was again noted that there is a brand new roof at Mt. Hope. This information was given to Mr. Kennedy by the principals and people in the building whom he interviewed. Mr. Kennedy promised the subcommittee he will look back at his notes to be sure the information he is reporting is correct.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

### **Near-Term**

Both Bristol and Warren need to continue to fund schedules for maintenance/repair and capital improvement. There is a need to continue community and school communication regarding short-term school facilities issues while reviewing the long-range plan for PK-12 facilities and educational program planning.

### **Long-Term**

A plan needs to be implemented to gain the most effective and efficient use of current educational spaces and provide for future

**space needs**

### **NEAR-TERM OPTION I**

**Engage in collaboration of some kind across district lines to meet anticipated increase in elementary enrollment.**

**Long term or temporary advantage to this option will provide flexibility in both communities and prevent overcrowding. The disadvantage to this option, an increase in transportation costs and students would not necessarily attend an elementary school in their hometown.**

### **LONG-TERM OPTION I**

**Bristol elementary schools are either at capacity or approaching capacity and the Warren elementary school is not far from reaching full capacity. The housing outlook and growth outlook previously discussed shows a strong likelihood that both communities will experience growth unless there is a willingness to increase class size which will create many difficulties in the classroom.**

**The construction of a new elementary school in both Bristol and Warren is Option I. Advantages include the maintaining of the elementary school alignment, having fewer crossovers and this will save on transportation costs by not having to move students across town lines. This option offers disadvantages such as less cost effectiveness and two smaller elementary schools would not provide**

as many program offerings. Core facilities would only be allowed to be built a certain size. It is very difficult to expand existing schools where core facilities are too small. Smaller schools are very limited.

## **LONG-TERM OPTION II**

The construction of an elementary school to accommodate the needs of both districts is Option II.

Advantages of this option include more elementary space for future growth with long-term flexibility and while providing equity across the district. Among the disadvantages would be the additional expense for new construction and transportation in conjunction with not allowing students to attend a hometown elementary school.

The evidence is very clear that at some point in the next decade, barring an economic situation that would be depression-like, there will be growth in both communities which is likely to push both communities over the planned operating capacity limits and put stress on the educational process in the elementary classroom. The positive side of this is that the district has some time to plan and that is why this committee has been formed. This committee will move forward to wrestle with such issues as building one new school for both communities or two new schools, one in each community. Now is a good time to begin to resolve these issues and engage in this type of thought process rather than get caught in a tough situation

down the road.

Chair Lynch asked if the spaces in Warren were not used for Bristol over the course of the next ten years, would the full track at Hugh Cole be enough to take on this projected growth. Mr. Kennedy stated it would depend on where the population falls out. With the full track available at Hugh Cole, Warren does have a bit of a safety net. However, there are other considerations that come into play and the committee has to deal with these. If regionalization at the elementary level did not go forward then there is a likelihood one community may be forced into building a new school in that town before the other community. However, each community would be responsible for contributing to the cost of a new school. The Town of Warren is responsible for 35% and Bristol 65% of the cost. It is easier to get voters to pass a ten million dollar bond than a twenty million dollar bond.

Mr. Saviano stated that an ideal plan would be to build a new school overlapping Bristol and Warren town lines.

Legislation is in the drafting stages by the District attorney, Andrew Henneous requesting regionalization at the elementary level. However this is a very long process. Both Bristol and Warren town councils have to recommend the elementary regionalization. Then it will go to the legislature where it will be discussed brought forward for a vote. It will then go for a vote to the public and it will only pass by a majority

**vote.**

**Chair Karen Lynch stated that the charge of this task force is to advise the full school committee as to the short-term and long-term issues and to make recommendations to the full committee as to a strategic approach in which to move forward.**

**Marjorie McBride brought up the option of using a building previously turned over to the town as a short-term solution should enrollment numbers increase before the start of the next school year. However, she was reminded by the Chair that this building is not available since it was given back to the town; and only by a majority vote from the full school committee can this building be considered as a viable option.**

**Mr. Kennedy would like to get feedback from members after they have had a chance to digest all the information that was put forward at tonight's meeting. School committee members not in attendance will be sent the NESDEC preliminary report and will be asked to carefully review the report and notify Dr. Mara and Karen Lynch with their comments and concerns. These will be gathered and forwarded to Mr. Kennedy. He will then make adjustments and complete the final report. A formal informational session will then be held by the full school committee and introduced to the public. The reports presented by NESDEC are based on extensive research and knowing**

the pros and cons of each of the option, short and long-term, allows for a more deliberate decision-making process. Karen will speak with Chairperson Paul Silva regarding the full committee schedule to see when this information session can be scheduled, the sooner the better.

Subcommittee member, John Bento, suggested the committee do some planning by using a backward timeline, a military planning tactic he believes will be advantageous in allowing the committee to make the most informative decisions. Indicators brought to the committee by the NESDEC group are key in defining this timeline, i.e. birth rate, permit applications, and sales of houses. He urged members to begin thinking outside the box. He spoke about incentives, plans to include inviting members of PTOs and communities to meetings, etc. Marjorie McBride agreed with John as it took four years and two votes to get the last bonds passed. Diana Campbell stated that beginning to work on a proactive approach for public relations campaign, a committee of people to put literature together to inform the public.

## **COURSE OF ACTION**

Share the information presented by NESDEC in a public forum. Let the public know that NESDEC is an independent outside agency which gathered information and put together an impartial study outlining the demography and enrollment projections over the next decade. Share options, offer solutions and urge the public to

**participate in assisting the task force to make the most informative decision possible to benefit students, the district and both communities.**

**Karen will speak with Claudia and Paul Silva about a date for this informational session.**

**A motion was made to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by John Bento. After a unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at 7:56 p.m.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Juliann Tanguay**